

# Rockbridge Alum Springs, Virginia copper printing plate

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undated, c.mid-late 19th Century

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## Title Statement

Rockbridge Alum Springs, Virginia copper printing plate  
Guide to the Rockbridge Alum Springs, Virginia copper printing plate MSS.16961

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## Publication Statement

**Publisher:** Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library  
P.O. Box 400110  
University of Virginia  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22904-4110  
URL: <https://small.library.virginia.edu/>

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6 May 2026

## Profile Description

**Creation:** This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-05-08 07:01:32 +0000.

**Language Usage:** Description is written in: English, Latin script.

**Descriptive Rules:** Describing Archives: A Content Standard

## Descriptive Summary

### Unit ID

MSS.16961

### Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

### Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/1914

### Unit Date

undated, c.mid-late 19th Century

### Mixed Materials

1 (folder)

### Language

English

### Extent

.03 Cubic Feet 1 folder (letter)

### Condition Description

Good.

### Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

# Administrative Information

## Conditions Governing Access

This collection has been minimally processed and is open for research.

## Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was purchased from Christine Cameron by the Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia on 14 July 2023.

## Preferred Citation

MSS 16961, Alum Springs, Rockbridge, Virginia copper printing plate, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library.

# Biographical / Historical

Development of what would become the Rockbridge Alum Springs resort began in 1790 when Alexander Campbell and John Dunlap purchased a 2,000-acre tract, including the mineral springs. Around 1820 Dunlap opened informal accommodations for visitors seeking the water's reputed medicinal benefits, and in 1834 a small resort hotel followed. Before 1850 the Campbell family constructed a three-story brick Central Hotel. In 1852 the property passed to John W. Frazier for \$150,000, who immediately launched an ambitious building campaign that more than doubled existing accommodations. The rebuilt resort opened June 1, 1853, and under William Frazier's management became one of Virginia's most fashionable destinations, ranking second only to White Sulphur Springs in popularity and capable of accommodating 600 to 800 guests by 1859. The surviving buildings reflect Frazier's eclecticism, drawing on Gothic Revival, Greek Revival, and vernacular traditions. Beyond resort operations, William Frazier actively marketed the springs through bottled water sales and printed promotional literature.

The Civil War ended the resort's antebellum prosperity when the complex was converted to a Confederate hospital. Competition from the adjacent Jordan Alum Springs, which opened a four-story Grand Hotel in 1873, further weakened its position. The two properties merged under new ownership in 1880, a railroad spur from Goshen was constructed to bring guests directly to the hotel, and further renovations were undertaken, but the resort never regained its antebellum standing. The main hotel closed in 1903, and the property finally succumbed during the Great Depression, selling in 1941 for \$7,000. In 1942 Harold Bailey, a naval architect and ornithologist, purchased the property and undertook significant restoration, though he demolished the original Central Hotel to build a museum for his ornithological collection on its site. Following the deaths of Mr. and Mrs. Bailey the property passed to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University before entering private ownership.

The district was listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register on April 21, 1987, and on the National Register of Historic Places on January 19, 1989.

## References

"Rockbridge Alum Springs Historic District." Virginia Department of Historic Resources, DHR file no. 081-0086. <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/081-0086/>. Accessed May 6, 2026.

Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks Staff. "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Rockbridge Alum Springs Historic District." Richmond: Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks, 1987. On file, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA. Listed January 19, 1989, NRHP reference no. 88003204.

# Content Description

This collection contains a copper plate engraved with a scene from Rockbridge Alum Springs. The resort name is displayed in script at the top of the plate. It shows the main pavilion of the Alum Spring resort, built to supply spring water and various visitors to the springs, including horse-drawn carriages, ladies with parasols, and men loading crates of "Alum water" onto wagons.

# Keywords

Engraving (printing process)

Rockbridge County (Va.)